



Oklahoma State Trade Expansion Program Guidelines and Rules - 2026

Oklahoma Department of Commerce
Global Trade and Investment Division

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Table of Contents

Purpose Statement	3
Governing Authority	3
Disclaimer of Liability	3
Accessibility & Transparency Statement.....	3
Introduction.....	4
SBA Priorities for STEP.....	4
STEP Eligibility Requirements.....	4
Oklahoma Supplier Portal Information	5
STEP Application Process	5
North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) CODE	5
STEP Funding.....	6
Funding Availability	6
Maximum Funding Amount Per Funding Cycle.....	6
Partnership Agreement with an ODOC Team.....	6
Outstanding Financial Obligation(s) to Oklahoma Business Roundtable.....	7
STEP Activities and Events	7
STEP Approved Activities.....	7
Approval Process for a Requested Event that is not STEP Approved	7
Trade Show Exhibition.....	7
STEP Allowable Expenses	7
SBA Required Reporting	8
Data Collection and Measurement of Outcomes - SBA Required Survey.....	8
STEP Reporting.....	8
STEP Reimbursement Process	8
Contact Information	10

Purpose Statement

These Guidelines establish the eligibility requirements, application procedures, funding parameters, reimbursement process, and program expectations for the Oklahoma State Trade Expansion Program (STEP). Their purpose is to provide applicants with consistent, transparent, and accurate information regarding participation in the program and the administration of STEP assistance by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce (ODOC). These Guidelines promote the fair, efficient, and accountable administration of federal STEP funds in accordance with applicable program requirements.

Governing Authority

These Guidelines are issued pursuant to the State Trade Expansion Program, authorized by 15 U.S.C. § 649(l), and administered by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce under the applicable U.S. Small Business Administration grant award. Program administration is subject to applicable federal laws, regulations, grant requirements, including 13 CFR Part 121 and, where applicable, 2 CFR Part 200, together with any applicable SBA program guidance, award terms, and conditions.

Disclaimer of Liability

These Guidelines are intended solely to provide general information regarding the administration of the Oklahoma State Trade Expansion Program and do not constitute a contract, guarantee of funding, or creation of any legal right or entitlement. Participation in the program and all funding determinations remain subject to applicable federal requirements, available funding, applicant eligibility, and approval by the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. In the event of a conflict between these Guidelines and applicable federal law or SBA requirements, the controlling legal authority shall govern.

Accessibility & Transparency Statement

The Oklahoma Department of Commerce is committed to providing information that is accessible, transparent, and available to all members of the public. This document is intended to comply with applicable federal and state accessibility requirements, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and other applicable accessibility standards. Consistent with Oklahoma's commitment to transparent government, this document is made publicly available to promote open access to program information while protecting information that is confidential or otherwise exempt from disclosure under the Guidance Transparency Act SB 1433 and any other applicable laws.

Introduction

STEP is a U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) grant program administered by the ODOC to support eligible small businesses in developing export activities and entering international markets. The program is designed to expand the number of small business exporters and increase export sales by helping businesses diversify into global markets.

SBA Priorities for STEP

- Increase the number of Eligible Small Businesses (ESBC's) in each state particularly New to Export (NTE) small businesses;
- Meet 100% utilization of the award;
- Increase Return on Investment (ROI)

STEP Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible, an applicant must meet the following requirements:

- Is organized or incorporated in the United States
- Is operating in the United States
- Own an Oklahoma based business which has been in business for not less than 1 year, as of the date on which assistance is provided
- Be a For-Profit Business
- Meet the SBA definition of a small business ([SBA size standards 13 C.F.R. Part 121.](#))
- Be an export ready U.S. company
- Have export products/services that contain a majority of U.S. content (51% or higher)
- In good standing with Oklahoma state agencies including the Secretary of State (SOS) and Oklahoma Tax Commission (OTC).
- Has access to sufficient resources to bear the costs associated with trade, including the costs of packing, shipping, freight forwarding, and customs brokers.

Note: Export Ready means a business that possesses the operational, financial, and production capacity to enter or expand into international markets and can reasonably fulfill export orders.

Note: Good standing means the business is legally authorized to conduct business in Oklahoma and is not delinquent in required state filings, registrations, or tax obligations.

Oklahoma Supplier Portal Information

The STEP Grant provides reimbursements for a percentage of pre-approved, allowable, export-related expenses.

In order to participate in the STEP Grant program, if you have not already done so, you must register as a new vendor to the State of Oklahoma, which can be accomplished through the Oklahoma Supplier Portal at vendors.ok.gov.

The Oklahoma Supplier Portal is the new online portal designed to assist suppliers, bidders and payees with self-registration and self-management of organization and personnel information.

Register as a payee if you or your organization are only receiving payments from the state.

STEP Application Process

- SBA requires a new grant application to be submitted for each funding period.
- Applications are submitted online via JotForm. Applications must include all documentation uploads. These documents must be current.
- An incomplete application will be rejected. The applicant may be contacted for additional information.

Note: ODOC may, but is not required to, permit correction of minor deficiencies. Rejection of an application does not prohibit submission of a future application unless otherwise prohibited by program requirements.

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) CODE

As part of the application process, applicants must provide their primary North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Code.

- ODOC reviews each application to determine program eligibility and evaluate the proposed export activity in accordance with the objectives of Oklahoma STEP and applicable SBA requirements.
- Applications are evaluated based on applicable program requirements, export readiness, the proposed export activity, anticipated export outcomes, and other factors identified in the approved Oklahoma STEP. Additional information may be requested to assist in the evaluation of an application.
- Applicants meeting the eligibility requirements of Oklahoma STEP are encouraged to apply regardless of industry classification. Submission of a NAICS Code does not, by itself, determine eligibility for funding or guarantee approval of an application.

STEP Funding

Funding Availability

STEP assistance is contingent upon the availability of federal funds, continued authorization of STEP by the SBA, and approval by ODOC. Nothing contained in these Guidelines shall be construed as creating an entitlement to funding. ODOC reserves the right to suspend, modify, limit, or terminate funding at any time.

Maximum Funding Amount Per Funding Cycle

- Maximum amount of grant per ESBC - \$28,500.00 cumulative per funding cycle.
- The maximum number of awards a STEP participant can receive per funding period is three (3).
- International show award – an award of up to \$11,000.00 per international show equals a STEP award of \$8,800.00 which equals 80% of the award, with a 20% cost, \$2,200.00 to participant.
- Domestic show award – an award of up to \$7,000.00 per domestic show equals a STEP award of \$5,600.00 which equals 80% of the award, with a 20% cost, \$1,400.00, to participant.
- These amounts were determined based on data collected pertaining to costs for various domestic and international events/activities.
- STEP Participant will cover a minimum of 20% of the cost of participation in STEP supported export activities. This amount could change based on the amount of STEP funding ODOC receives from SBA.
- Each event/activity has its own “cap” – funding award for each event. The 80/20% will vary based on award for each event/activity.
- If a company is requesting STEP funding for an event for reimbursable expenses or partial partnership fee and said company is also sponsoring a reception, breakfast, luncheon, or dinner at same event, doing both is not allowed. Company will need to determine either STEP funds for reimbursement, partial partnership fee or sponsoring an activity at the event.

NOTE: Based on SBA's priority to increase the number of New to Export (NTE) ESBC's in each state, approved applications for New to Export companies will be prioritized for funding.

Partnership Agreement with an ODOC Team

If your company is participating in a STEP eligible activity and you are partnering with an ODOC Team (e.g., ACES or Global), have an approved STEP application on file, you will receive a “Notice of Funding” award letter. This means your STEP funding will be applied to a portion of your partnership fee in accordance with the Partnership Agreement. You will not be entitled to reimbursement of any

kind for this activity. You will be responsible for payment of the remaining balance of the partnership fee. This balance will be made payable to the Oklahoma Business Roundtable.

Outstanding Financial Obligation(s) to Oklahoma Business Roundtable

If a STEP applicant is requesting funding for an event and the company has an outstanding balance(s) with Oklahoma Business Roundtable, the funding request will be denied until financial obligation(s) is resolved.

STEP Activities and Events

STEP Approved Activities

Approved Activities include:

- Trade Show Exhibition (in-person); (You will find a list of approved STEP activities in a drop down box on the application)
- Commerce Led Foreign Trade Missions
- Export Training Workshops

NOTE: "Walking" a show is not considered an approved activity.

Approval Process for a Requested Event that is not STEP Approved

The STEP applicant will provide the following information for a non-approved event to be considered STEP eligible:

- Name, Date, and Location of the show
- Web link to the show (www.worldofconcrete.com)
- Justification for exhibition (international companies exhibiting and potential for export sales – minimum of 20% international attendees)
- Booth space registration cost; Show registration fee (exhibitor passes) for two (2) individuals to attend the show

Trade Show Exhibition

STEP Allowable Expenses

- Eligible expenses include Booth Space Registration Cost, Booth Build and Show Registration (Exhibitor passes),
- Booth Space Registration Cost – the fee charged by an event organizer for the right to occupy a designated space (a booth) at a trade show or exhibition which allows companies to exhibit their products or services.

- Booth Build – additional “rental” items for your booth provided by the Event’s Preferred Vendor not included in the booth space registration cost. Example: carpet, chairs, table, monitor, electricity, will be considered eligible reimbursable expenses. Signage, graphics, pop-ups unique to company will not be considered as part of booth build. Items purchased by company for use in a booth will not be reimbursable. This includes signage, graphics, and pop-ups purchased by the company.
- Show Registration (Exhibitor passes) – capped at two (2) people per company per show.
- ESBC will be reimbursed up to 100% of the above listed costs up to the “cap” – amount awarded for event.

SBA Required Reporting

Data Collection and Measurement of Outcomes - SBA Required Survey

At the conclusion of a STEP activity, the STEP director will email an SBA required survey to each STEP participant that participated in the activity. This survey needs to be completed and returned to STEP within 2 weeks of the event.

STEP Reporting

- You will receive an SBA survey required from STEP participants after each event. This survey needs to be completed and returned within 2 weeks of the event.
- Key metrics in the survey include:
 - Actual Sales
 - Projected Sales (18 months post event)
 - Jobs created or retained
- These numbers are reported to SBA in Aggregate Format, with companies de-identified.
- To continue receiving STEP Grant funding, Oklahoma must demonstrate a reasonable Return on Investment (ROI).

STEP Reimbursement Process

After you have attended a STEP eligible activity/event and you have completed and returned the SBA required survey, you will receive the STEP Reimbursement Invoice and Checklist to complete and submit your allowable expenses for reimbursement.

The Reimbursement Invoice includes information pertaining to company information; Purchase Order number; invoice number, invoice date; description, date, location of event; who attended event and dollar figure of reimbursement requested.

The Checklist includes instructions for submitting the reimbursement invoice as well as examples of the supporting documentation to support the invoice.

STEP Reimbursement Invoices are to be submitted to ODOC accounts payable – accounts_payable@okcommerce.gov. with a cc: to Kathy.gain@okcommerce.gov. STEP will review and approve invoice and documentation prior to submitting approval to accounts payable. If there are any questions, STEP will contact you for clarification.

Once the invoice has been submitted to accounts payable, the reimbursement process could take up to 45 days.

These guidelines are specific to the Oklahoma STEP program. Please review and comply with these Guidelines. Failure to do so may affect eligibility for current or future STEP funding. The Oklahoma Department of Commerce reserves the right to revise or interpret these Guidelines as necessary to comply with applicable federal requirements and administer the STEP program.



Contact Information

Oklahoma Department of Commerce
Global Trade and Investment Division
900 N Stiles Ave.

Oklahoma City, OK 73104

Website: www.okcommerce.gov

Phone: 800-879-6552